

Union Calendar No. 259

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3877

[Report No. 110–411]

To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish an initiative to promote the research, development, and demonstration of miner tracking and communications systems and to promote the establishment of standards regarding underground communications to protect miners in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 17, 2007

Mr. MATHESON (for himself, Mr. GORDON of Tennessee, Mr. WHITFIELD, Mr. ROSS, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. CANNON, Mr. BACHUS, and Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Science and Technology

OCTOBER 29, 2007

Additional sponsors: Mr. WU and Mr. UDALL of Colorado

OCTOBER 29, 2007

Reported with amendments, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on October 17, 2007]

A BILL

To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish an initiative to promote the research, development, and demonstration of miner

tracking and communications systems and to promote the establishment of standards regarding underground communications to protect miners in the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 *This Act may be cited as the “Mine Communications*
 5 *Technology Innovation Act”.*

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 *Congress finds the following:*

8 (1) *The failure of miner tracking and commu-*
 9 *nications devices or lack thereof in mines severely*
 10 *hampers rescue efforts in the event of emergencies.*

11 (2) *Mines, particularly underground mines, have*
 12 *properties that present unique technical challenges for*
 13 *the integration of currently available tracking and*
 14 *communications systems. These properties include the*
 15 *lack of a clear path or open air which is required for*
 16 *radio signals and WiFi. Additionally, because coal is*
 17 *an absorptive material, less than 10 percent of the*
 18 *radio spectrum that is used above ground can be used*
 19 *underground. A fraction of that (only about 1 per-*
 20 *cent) radio spectrum is actually allocated for commer-*
 21 *cial communications purposes. As a consequence, the*
 22 *availability of miner communication equipment is se-*
 23 *verely limited.*

1 (3) *Research and experience have shown that*
2 *communications and tracking systems may not work*
3 *equally well in every mine or in every emergency sit-*
4 *uation, and therefore several different systems may be*
5 *necessary for development and integration.*

6 (4) *Because of the serious challenges of the mine*
7 *environment and the limited market provided by the*
8 *mining industry, much needed technology has not yet*
9 *been developed by the private sector or is not commer-*
10 *cially available in the United States.*

11 (5) *Furthermore, due to the regulatory structure*
12 *of the industry and the lengthy approval process for*
13 *mine tracking and communications systems, research*
14 *must be accelerated so that next generation technology*
15 *can be quickly and efficiently integrated into mines*
16 *to protect the safety of miners.*

17 (6) *The National Institute of Standards and*
18 *Technology is well positioned to help accelerate the de-*
19 *velopment of mining tracking and communications*
20 *technology. The National Institute of Standards and*
21 *Technology has a long history of working in conjunc-*
22 *tion with industry to invest in longer-term, high-risk*
23 *research which yields national benefits far beyond*
24 *private payoff. Further, the National Institute of*
25 *Standards and Technology builds partnerships with*

1 *industry to leverage existing research and develop-*
 2 *ment to drive next generation technology.*

3 *(7) The National Institute of Standards and*
 4 *Technology is well-positioned to accelerate develop-*
 5 *ment of consensus mining communications standards*
 6 *given the extensive work that the organization has*
 7 *done in the field of emergency communications to de-*
 8 *velop standards and technologies for interoperable*
 9 *wireless telecommunications and information systems.*

10 *(8) In developing such standards, the National*
 11 *Institute of Standards and Technology should work in*
 12 *cooperation with the National Institute for Occupa-*
 13 *tional Safety and Health and the Mine Safety and*
 14 *Health Administration, and other relevant public and*
 15 *private stakeholders, to build on existing technology*
 16 *and knowledge regarding mine communications sys-*
 17 *tems.*

18 **SEC. 3. MINE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRACKING RESEARCH**
 19 **AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AUTHORIZA-**
 20 **TION.**

21 *(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Director of the National*
 22 *Institute of Standards and Technology shall provide for the*
 23 *establishment of a program of research, development, and*
 24 *demonstration that includes the establishment of best prac-*
 25 *tices, adaptation of existing technology, and efforts to accel-*

1 *erate the development of next generation technology and*
2 *tracking systems for mine communications.*

3 *(b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the*
4 *Director shall coordinate with relevant Federal agencies*
5 *and industry to evaluate areas of research and development*
6 *and best practices that will be most promising in protecting*
7 *miner safety.*

8 *(c) OPTIONAL FOCUS.—In establishing this program,*
9 *the Director may focus on the following communications*
10 *and tracking system characteristics:*

11 *(1) Systems that are likely to work in emergency*
12 *situations.*

13 *(2) Systems that work in coal mines, with spe-*
14 *cial attention paid to deep underground coal mines.*

15 *(3) Systems that provide coverage throughout all*
16 *areas of the mine.*

17 *(4) Hybrid systems that use both wireless and*
18 *infrastructure based systems.*

19 *(5) Functionality for 2-way and voice commu-*
20 *nications.*

21 *(6) Systems that serve emergency and routine*
22 *communications needs.*

23 *(7) The ability to work with existing legacy sys-*
24 *tems and to be quickly integrated.*

1 (8) *Propagation environment characterization,*
 2 *performance metrics, and independently derived vali-*
 3 *dation tests to verify performance for standards devel-*
 4 *opment.*

5 **SEC. 4. STANDARDS REGARDING UNDERGROUND COMMU-**
 6 **NICATIONS.**

7 *The Director of the National Institute of Standards*
 8 *and Technology shall work with industry and relevant Fed-*
 9 *eral agencies to develop consensus industry standards for*
 10 *communications in underground mines. The Director shall*
 11 *also develop and provide any needed measurement services*
 12 *to support implementation of these standards. In their ef-*
 13 *forts to help develop these standards and related measure-*
 14 *ment services, the following issues should be addressed:*

15 (1) *The appropriate use of frequency bands and*
 16 *power levels.*

17 (2) *Matters related to interoperability of systems,*
 18 *applications, and devices.*

19 (3) *Technology to prevent interference.*

20 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

21 *There are authorized to be appropriated to the Director*
 22 *of the National Institute of Standards and Technology such*
 23 *sums as are necessary for carrying out this Act for fiscal*
 24 *years 2009 and 2010, to be derived from amounts author-*
 25 *ized under section 3001 of the America COMPETES Act.*

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish an initiative to promote the research, development, and demonstration of miner tracking and communications systems and to promote the establishment of standards and other measurement services regarding underground communications to protect miners in the United States.”.

Union Calendar No. 259

110TH CONGRESS
1ST Session

H. R. 3877

[Report No. 110-411]

A BILL

To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish an initiative to promote the research, development, and demonstration of miner tracking and communications systems and to promote the establishment of standards regarding underground communications to protect miners in the United States.

OCTOBER 29, 2007

Reported with amendments, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed